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1962/11/20

BRIEFING PAPER FOR THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE

November 20, 1962

SUBJECT: [Intelligence gap on existence of
offensive weapons in Cuba

QUESTION: How do you explain the so-called intelligence gap in determining the existence of offensive weapons in Cuba?

ANSWER: On the question of intelligence about Soviet arms in Cuba, let me simply say this. Throughout the months preceding the discovery of offensive missiles in Cuba, the many resources of the intelligence community were steadily directed to analyzing, disproving, or verifying all rumors and reports about Soviet activities in Cuba. This was a major undertaking; involving as it did not only the separation of accurate reports from inaccurate ones, but also the systematic continuation of intelligence collection activities. The first moment that hard intelligence of the existence of offensive missiles in Cuba was obtained on October 15, the policy discussions began which led to the decision announced October 22.

In a field as complicated as intelligence, the available information is rarely all that is needed or desired. However, I can assure you in all seriousness that knowledge of the developing situation in Cuba represented not an intelligence failure, but a major intelligence triumph. I believe that all Americans owe a debt of gratitude to the Director of Central Intelligence, Mr. McCone, and to all the members of the intelligence community who supported him in his efforts. I am sure you will agree with me that the public interest will not be served by detailed speculation concerning the internal operations of this intelligence effort.